

# Secrets to **greatness** on the Planning Commission: Maximizing your effectiveness

Milpitas Planning Commission  
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PRESENTED BY

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# Goals

- Provide fair, impartial forum for hearing land use applications
- Balance analysis from staff with City goals and regulations, applicant's request, and public input
- Make well-considered decisions and recommendations supported by evidence

Goals are realized through working relationships

# Working relationships

- Each Planning Commissioner and
  - Staff
  - Applicants and members of the public
  - Fellow Commissioners
- Tonight's topic: maximizing the effectiveness of these relationships

# Working with staff

- Staff as resource
- Behind the scenes
  - Completeness
  - Processing of application
  - Environmental review
  - Consultation with other departments/agencies
  - Project changes
  - Legal
  - Recommendation
  - Noticing and agenda preparation

# Working with staff

- Work product: packet
  - Staff report
  - Action item
  - Plans, elevations, maps, etc.
- Presentation at meeting
- PC role
  - Recommendation to City Council
  - Final decision

# Working with staff

- Maximizing effectiveness
  1. Review all packet materials carefully before meeting
    - Plan scale
    - General plan and zoning
    - Vicinity map and site plan comparison
    - Views
    - Contours and grading
    - Trees and landscaping
    - Circulation and parking
    - Layout
    - Architecture and materials

# Working with staff

- Maximizing effectiveness (continued)
  2. Consider the required findings and whether you have all needed information
    - Finding: determination or conclusion based on the evidence presented to you in support of your decision
  3. Contact staff with questions or areas of concern
    - Project or process questions
    - Concerns
    - Potential conflicts
    - Absences

# Working with staff

- Maximizing effectiveness (continued)
  4. Faithfully uphold the Brown Act
  5. Use hearing to question staff further and to state basis for your decisions
  6. Provide feedback



# Working with applicants and the public

- Hearing procedures
  - Staff presentation and recommendation
  - Commission questions of staff
  - Applicant presentation
  - Commission questions of applicant
  - Public comment
  - Public hearing closed; Commission discussion
  - Commission action

# Working with applicants and the public

- Maximizing effectiveness
  1. Come prepared with questions of applicant
    - Scope of questions: land use impacts
  2. Listen carefully to both applicant and the public
  3. Wait to reach your decision until the hearing is concluded and all interested persons have had an opportunity to speak and present information
  4. Carefully follow the Brown Act
  5. Be prepared to disclose any ex parte communications
  6. Be prepared to explain your position

# Working with your colleagues

- Brown Act requires your work as a body be done in public
- Attendance critical
- Familiarity with packet materials and City policies and requirements provides common starting ground for entire body

# Working with your colleagues

- Maximizing effectiveness
  1. Listen carefully to each Commissioner's statements and questions
  2. Be willing to consider alternatives or compromises, where appropriate
  3. If considering new or different conditions, consider:
    - Nexus
    - Environmental impacts
  4. Honor the good intentions of your colleagues
  5. Ask for clarification if necessary

# Going the extra mile

- Provide guideposts
- Remember the importance of 'because'
- Establish a clear record
- Be familiar with City policies and regulations
- Use resources available to you

# Questions?